

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

What You Should Know About Appearing in Court

1. How do I find a criminal defense lawyer?

If you can afford an attorney, you may call the New York City Bar Association Legal Referral Service at (212) 626-7373 (English) (212) 626-7374 (Spanish). You can also speak with friends or neighbors who may know an attorney, or check the yellow pages.

If you cannot afford an attorney at your arraignment the court will appoint a lawyer for you from an indigent defense law firm like The Legal Aid Society. Or the court may appoint a private attorney from a panel of criminal defense attorneys operated by the Courts. These attorneys are usually called “18-b attorneys.”

If the police are looking for you in order to arrest you, or have asked that you come to the precinct for some reason, and you cannot afford an attorney, you may call The Legal Aid Society office in the county of the precinct that has contacted you. An attorney will advise you and may accompany you to the precinct.

2. How do I find out who my criminal defense lawyer is?

If you know what organization your attorney is from but forget the attorney’s name, you should call that organization in the county where your case is. If you don’t know which office was assigned to your case, you will have to call each one. Since The Legal Aid Society is the primary public defender in New York City, start with the Legal Aid office in the county where your case is pending.

New York County (Manhattan)

- *The Legal Aid Society: 212-298-5000 (ask for Central Records)*
- *New York County Defender Services: 212-803-5100*
- *Neighborhood Defender Services of Harlem: 212-876-5500*
- *18-b Panel Attorneys: 212-676-0063, 0060 Angelina Morcelo or 212-676-0081, 0082 Lorraine Turner*

Bronx County

- *The Legal Aid Society 718-579-3000: (ask for Central Records)*
- *Bronx Defenders: 718-838-7878*
- *18-b Panel Attorneys: 212-676-0063 or 212-676-0060 (Angelina Morcelo)*
- *18-b Panel Attorneys: 212-676-0081 (Lorraine Turner)*

Kings County (Brooklyn)

- *The Legal Aid Society 718-237-2000 (ask for Central Records)*
- *Brooklyn Defender Services 718-254-0700*
- *18-b Panel Attorneys 212-676-0099 (Jennifer James)*

Queens County

- *The Legal Aid Society 718-286-2000 (ask for Central Records)*
- *Queens Law Associates 718-261-3047*
- *18-b Panel Attorneys 212-676-0099 (Jennifer James)*

Richmond County (Staten Island)

- *Battiste, Aronowsky & Suchow 718-354-3200*
- *18-b Panel Attorneys 212-676-0061 (Jeanette Descheers)*

3. How do I find out when my case is on next?

Call your attorney, or the office in which that attorney works.

If you want a quick and reasonably accurate website, try WebCrim www.courts.state.ny.us, the website of the New York State Unified Court System. WebCrim provides online access to criminal cases with future appearance dates in all criminal courts in New York City and Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the County Courts in the Ninth Judicial District (which includes Westchester, Rockland, Orange, Putnam and Dutchess Counties), the County Court in Erie County, and the Buffalo City Court.

4. How can I find out what courtroom my case is in?

If you can find your case in WebCrim, the New York State Unified Court System website, it will give you the date and the court part of your next appearance.

Court calendars are posted daily in the lobby of each courthouse. Cases are listed by either docket or indictment number, or by name. If your name does not appear on the calendar, go to the Central Clerk's Office in the courthouse.

5. What do I do if I missed my court date?

If you missed your court date, contact your attorney immediately, since it is likely that the judge issued a warrant for your arrest, called a bench warrant. If it has only been a few days, since the missed appearance report to the Central Clerk's Office in the borough your case was scheduled to clear up the warrant. Bring any documents that might explain your absence.

If it has been a longer period of time or you were charged with a felony, it is especially important for you to speak to your lawyer before coming to court to clear the warrant. Your lawyer can advise you what to expect in court, documents you might bring to court to explain your absence, and arrange to be with you when you come to court to surrender on a warrant.



MAKING THE CASE FOR HUMANITY

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